



ArtScene

Designing and creating your new home environment is exciting, but finding just the right piece of art to add that crucial finishing touch can be frustrating.

Bruce Denny had exactly that experience but instead of giving up the search he took DIY enthusiasm to new heights and decided to make his own!

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Upwardly Mobile



Towing the Line



Fitting In

Sitting Pretty

His brave idea became reality when he enrolled on a part-time fine art course at nearby Morley College where Bruce revelled in giving full rein to his untapped artistic talent. This story was revealed to me in Bruce's email and whilst at first I admired his courage, I imagined very amateurish work resulting from it, especially as he had told me that his metamorphosis from City employee to full-time sculptor had taken a mere six months. With due hesitation I opened the attached images. It was one of those EUREKA! moments which are rare for art critics who look at hundreds of art images every week. I stared at my computer screen half-disbelievingly because staring back at me were not clumsily-modelled pieces but very good figurative bronzes.

I could not wait to learn more so I picked up the phone and arranged to interview Bruce at his studio and to see the apartment he and his partner had completely redesigned and refurbished in London's SE1 district. My arrival was greeted by one pleasant shock after another as I realised I was in the company of someone who applies high standards to every department of his life.

Firstly, the studio. Occupying the space under one of London's railway arches, it was painted black with dramatic lighting. And unlike every other artist's studio I have visited, dust would not dare! A dozen finished pieces, all approximately life-size, were strategically placed on contemporary plinths designed by Bruce. Simple, angular and made of ultra-smooth stainless-steel they contrasted well with the roughly-hewn sculptures which they elevated to optimum viewing height. The overall impression was of a state-of-the-art gallery but behind a half-screen at the rear of the space lay Bruce's work room. Here, models pose, are photographed and eventually become clay versions of themselves.

Bruce particularly enjoys sculpting male and female nudes because of their timeless quality. They were well modelled and as I scanned the room, my eyes were magnetically drawn to a piece in the centre called *Towing the Line*. The title, like many of the others selected by Bruce, is a pun on the social norms that many of us have to grapple with. This particular work features a young male with well-developed muscles

taking the strain of a heavy rope. The acutely-angled pose is perfectly balanced against the taught rope and the loosely coiled section at his feet enhances the realism of this powerful piece.

By contrast, *Sitting Pretty* evokes a female feeling very comfortable with her lot. An asymmetrical pose places her casually seated, one leg dangling across the other, head resting on her shoulder; she shows no signs of struggle with the world around her. Her long limbs are elegant whilst her rounded hips, thighs and breasts define her femininity. Bruce likes some of his work to be 'colourful', so, using a combination of different chemicals, a lovely blue patina has made this figure serene and all the more appealing.

The ball-like pose of *Fitting In* illustrates the way we have to metaphorically contort ourselves to conform to life's expectations. Feelings of angst and introspection are palpable through the hidden face, enveloped arms and rigid feet but its curved shape also gives it an irresistible tactile quality. At the opposite end of the scale of social dilemmas is Bruce's depiction of *Dropping Out*, a dramatic contrapposto sculpture portraying a male battling to retain his balance as he falls to the ground. These well executed works were so convincing, they *really* made me reflect on life. I was now eager to see the apartment that became the catalyst to Bruce's change of profession. It also bore the hallmarks of his creative talents: Spacious, light, stunningly contemporary yet very comfortable and designed to appreciate the breathtaking views over London. Bruce and his partner had taken the utmost care over every detail. Each piece of Bruce's sculpture was well placed and shown off to maximum effect with variable, dramatic lighting adding that unique finishing touch. Well done, Bruce, you found not only the art you wanted but the artist in yourself. ■

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